

Message Text

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43

ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 EB-07 COME-00 TRSE-00 OPIC-03 AID-05 OMB-01

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R 101146Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8283

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY BANGUI

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY KIGALI

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIBREVILLE 1798

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, ECIN, EAIR, GB

SUBJECT: GABONS WITHDRAWAL FROM OCAM

1. SUMMARY: FOLLOWING COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING, SEPTEMBER 7 GOG ANNOUNCED DECISION TO WITHDRAW FROM OCAM. GABON WILL REMAIN, HOWEVER, MEMBER OF ITS SPECIALIZED SUBSIDIARY ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS ASECNA, AIR AFRIQUE, AND HOTAFRIC. SINCE DECISION ANNOUNCED, TWO EDITORIALS IN GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED DAILY "L'UNION" AND PRESIDENT BONGOS REMARKS AT AIRPORT PRESS CONFERENCE IN PARIS, SEPTEMBER 8, HAVE SPELLED OUT OBVIOUS REASONS BEHIND GABONS DECISION AND HINTED AT SOME LESS OBVIOUS ONE AS WELL. END SUMMARY.

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2. "L'UNION" STRESSES GABONS DECISION AS PRIMARILY IN SUPPORT OF

OAU, MENTIONING BONGOS CURRENT POSITION AS OAU VICE PRESIDENT AND LIKELY ACCESSION TO PRESIDENCY NEXT YEAR. "L'UNION REPEATS CLAIM MADE BY MAURITANIA IN 1965 WHEN IT WITHDREW FROM OCAM, SAYING ORGANIZATION TENDED TO COMPETE WITH AND WEAKEN OAU. NEWSPAPER ALSO MENTIONS RECENT UDEAC SUMMIT IN BRAZZAVILLE DURING WHICH REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT BANK WAS INAUGURATED AND POINTS OUT THAT REGIONAL ECONOMIC GROUPINGS SUCH AS UDEAC HAVE LEGITIMATE ROLE WITHIN PANAFRICAN STRUCTURE OF OAU WHILE OCAM TODAY IS ONLY "ANACHRONISM". "L'UNION" ALSO ACCUSES OCAM OF NEO-COLONIALIST CHARACTER SINCE IT WAS ORIGINALLY CREATED OUT OF SENTIMENTAL TIES AMONG EX-FRENCH COLONIES. TODAY, THESE TIES ONLY SERVE TO PROLONG "OLD COLONIAL GAME" OF FORMER METROPOLE. FINALLY, PAPER POINTS OUT THAT OCAM HAS BEEN DYING SLOW DEATH SINCE DEFEAT OF FOUR MEMBERS IN 1972-1973 AND THERE IS NO REASON TO PROLONG ITS DEATH AGONY.

3. BONGO IN PARIS PRESS CONFERENCE DISMISSED QUESTION OF WHETHER WITHDRAWAL MEANT ESTRANGEMENT FROM FRANCE WITH REMARK THAT "OCAM DIED OF ITSELF SINCE IT NO LONGER HAD ROLE TO PLAY". PRESIDENT ALSO STRESSED GABON'S INTENTION TO REMAIN IN AIR AFRIQUE AS WELL AS OTHER OCAM SPECIALIZED BODIES.

4. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH FRENCH EMBASSY HERE DOES NOT ADMIT THAT GABON'S DECISION REFLECTS DISSATISFACTION BY BONGO WITH FRENCH AFRICAN POLICY, EMBASSY BELIEVES BONGO DID INTEND TO DEMONSTRATE INCREASING INDEPENDENCE FROM FRANCE BY OCAM WITHDRAWAL. BONGO NO LONGER TOLERATES TRADITIONAL DOMINANCE WITHIN OCAM OF OLD FRENCH FAVORITES SENEGAL AND IVORY COAST. ANOTHER IMPORTANT FACTOR WAS GABON'S IRRITATION WITH HIGH COST OF OCAM WHICH PRODUCED NO APPRECIABLE BENEFITS. "L'UNION" COMMENTED THAT GABON WOULD NO LONGER SERVE AS OCAM "MILK COW". EMBASSY ALSO BELIEVES THAT LINK EXISTS, AS WAS CASE WITH CAMEROON'S WITHDRAWAL FROM OCAM IN 1974, BETWEEN GABON'S OCAM DECISION AND BONGOS INTENTIONS TOWARD AIR AFRIQUE. IN SPITE OF PRESIDENT'S PROTESTS TO CONTRARY, GABON SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING ABANDONING AIR AFRIQUE IN FAVOR OF CHANGING NATIONAL AIRLINE, AIR GABON, INTO INTERNATIONAL CARRIER. WITHDRAWAL FROM OCAM WOULD BE LOGICAL

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STEP PRIOR TO QUITTING AIR AFRIQUE. STEIGMAN

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Message Attributes

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